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A FILIPINO APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES.

BY APOLINARIO MABINI, FORMERLY PRIME MINISTER IN
AGUINALDO'S CABINET.

ON the ninth of last May I ceased to participate in the government of my native land, because the National Assembly had deemed it expedient that others should take my place, in the hope that some compromise might thereby be arrived at which would put an end to the war between the United States and the Philippines in a manner friendly and honorable to both sides. The representatives of the American Government had previously found me at President Aguinaldo's side, at the head of the public business of the Philippines, in the capacity of Privy Councillor from June of last year, and as Prime Minister of the Cabinet provided by the Constitution from January of the present year. For this reason, and because I belong to the pure native race and have never been away from my country since my infancy, I know not only all the facts concerning the events which have taken place in the Philippines since the destruction of the Spanish fleet by Admiral Dewey, but also the real feelings of my people toward the people of the United States.

I am impelled to write, on the one hand, by the ardent desire to let the American people know the whole truth, which has perhaps been distorted by interested parties, and which alone can render complete justice to the Filipino people; and, on the other hand, by a no less urgent wish, inspired by feelings of humanity, to bring the present war to a close, and end the mutual destruction of two peoples who ought to make common cause in contributing to the consolidation of civilization and the progress of the world.

Before Admiral Dewey came to the Philippines with his fleet, he had a conference with General Aguinaldo; and after having assured the latter that the feelings of the American people were of the most friendly character, since the purpose of his Government was to aid the Filipinos, if they for their part would help in the war waged against the Spaniards for the independence of Cuba, he asked whether Aguinaldo considered himself strong enough to maintain order in the whole archipelago after the Spaniards were expelled. General Aguinaldo replied that he would answer not only for order and for his people, but also that the war should be carried on in accordance with the practice of civilized nations if he were provided with arms. On receiving this reply, the Admiral promised that Aguinaldo should be supplied with arms. He then started for Manila, in whose waters he gained a complete victory and destroyed the Spanish fleet.

After the victory, the Admiral discovered that all the Spanish land forces were concentrated in very considerable numbers and entrenched in Manila, Cavite, Tayabas, Laguna, Morong, Bulacan, Bataan and Panpanga, without counting small garrisons in other provinces; and he perceived the necessity of a respectable army to rout the Spaniards and occupy Manila and Cavite. For this reason he had to send the cruiser "McCullough" to Hong Kong for Aguinaldo, at the same time that he asked his Government for troops. Aguinaldo was received with the honors of a general by the Admiral, who renewed his former promises and delivered to him ninety-six rifles which were found in the arsenal at Cavite, authorizing him to establish himself in that port and to exercise authority over what he found there, with the exception of the arsenal, which was occupied by a small American force that had been landed. Aguinaldo found the houses in the port uninhabited and in ruins, and there was no one to keep order or look after the safety and interests of the citizens. Hence he was obliged to call upon the inhabitants to return and establish a local government under his supervision—which did not include the territory of the arsenal—and he then issued a manifesto to the people of the Philippines.

The Filipinos, who had been undecided, because they did not know whether the Americans were friends or enemies, welcomed the manifesto with joy, and, recognizing Aguinaldo as their in-

disputable chief, each province began to overcome and capture the Spanish forces within its jurisdiction. This movement began at the end of May, 1898; and by the end of the following June the struggle was localized in the capitals of Manila, Batangas, Tayabas, Laguna, Morong, Bulacan, Pamanga and Tarlac, the Spanish forces occupying these towns being besieged in them. They were soon obliged to surrender to the Filipino forces and become their prisoners, the only exception being the garrison of Manila. Meanwhile, the Admiral congratulated Aguinaldo on his victories, allowed the landing of two thousand rifles which had been bought for the Filipinos with Hong Kong funds, permitted the Filipino vessels to sail with Filipino flags on Manila Bay, let Aguinaldo govern not only the reconquered provinces, but also the port of Cavite itself except the arsenal, handed over to him Spanish prisoners made by the American ships, and, lastly, referred to him the claims filed by Spanish merchants in regard to certain vessels captured from the Spaniards by the Filipinos.

Shortly after this, Anderson's brigade arrived at the Philippines. On landing at the port of Cavite, General Anderson notified Aguinaldo that he was the provisional chief of the American army until the arrival of General Merritt, and made in the name of his Government new protestations of friendship and aid in favor of the liberty of the Filipinos. But soon, under pretense that it was necessary to clean the streets and houses of the port so that the American soldiers then on the way might be decently lodged, and to prevent trouble and friction between the American and the Filipino soldiers, he took charge of the government of the port, and prohibited the Filipinos from going armed about the streets, while drunken Americans committed all sorts of assaults on the citizens. Aguinaldo, desirous of saving trouble and avoiding a rupture, moved on to Bacood, leaving a small force at the port, the command of which was entrusted to a general, whose orders were to avoid all conflict with the Americans and to advise the citizens to keep calm and cultivate feelings of concord and friendship. No sooner had General Anderson become aware of this than he seized a warehouse of naval stores, the property of a rich merchant in Cavite, which Aguinaldo had been entrusted to hold subject to the owner's orders.

After this General Merritt arrived, who in notifying Aguinaldo that he had come as Governor-General of the Philippines and Commander-in-Chief of the American Army, asked for firewood, carts, oxen and horses for his soldiers. Having issued a proclamation to the people of the Philippines, in which he reiterated the promises of friendship and assistance on the faith of a free people, he landed forces in Parañaque, a town held by the Filipinos, without informing Aguinaldo. There the American forces constructed a very extensive trench in the rear of the Filipinos to serve as a basis of operations, stationed themselves along the line through Maytubig, and seized many trenches constructed and occupied by the Filipinos.

Meanwhile, General Merritt was parleying, behind the backs of the Filipinos, with the Spanish garrison of Manila to induce them to surrender. The Spaniards, shut in on the land side by the Filipinos and threatened from the sea by the American ships, agreed to surrender on the first attack from Maytubig, provided the fleet would not bombard the city. Then General Merritt ordered his troops to attack by way of Maytubig without informing Aguinaldo.

Nevertheless, when the Filipino troops became aware of the aggressive action of the Americans, they moved forward in line with the advance guard to help those whom they believed to be their friends and allies. The Spaniards, who were also ignorant of the agreement made by their general, offered a furious resistance to the attack and directed their fire against the American troops, whom they hated more even than they hated the Filipinos. The Americans, perceiving that they were the targets for the Spanish bullets, fell in behind the Filipinos, whom they then allowed to advance. When the Spaniards saw that they would have to engage the Filipinos, they abandoned their positions, thinking, perhaps, and rightly, that if they had to give up the islands, the best they could do would be to give them up to their inhabitants, and that consequently further bloodshed was useless. Then the Americans advanced, seized the positions taken by the Filipinos and hoisted the American flag in the place of the Filipino banner. These manœuvres were repeated several times, until the American and Filipino advance guards reached the suburb of Hermita, when it became known that the capitulation had been signed.

It was here that General Aguinaldo's tremendous prestige with the Filipinos was abundantly shown; for if it had not been for his peremptory order to avoid all conflict with the American troops, the Filipino army would not have suffered such injustice and the strife between them would have broken out then and there. But Aguinaldo, and with him the Filipino people, believed in the promises of friendship and liberty proclaimed by the American generals in the name of their Government and on the good faith of a free people.

To that effect General Aguinaldo wrote to General Merritt, complaining in friendly terms of the conduct observed toward the Filipinos. He remarked at the same time that it was not right for the Americans alone to profit by the victory, since most of the credit belonged to the Filipinos, who had shut in the Spainards. If it had not been for this blockade on the land side, he added, the Americans might have destroyed the city, but they could not have obliged the Spanish troops to surrender, because they could in the end have retreated to the interior of the island. I may say now that, thanks to that surrender, President McKinley succeeded in obtaining the cession of the Philippines by the treaty of Paris. Merritt's only reply was to ask for the withdrawal of the Filipino forces who had reached Hermita, Paco and Malate during the attack from Maytubig, which he did by sending Consul Williams as a semi-official emissary to tell Aguinaldo that General Merritt was furious at him for not having placed himself under the orders of the American generals according to agreement.

Finally, General Merritt departed and General Otis took his place. Immediately upon taking charge, the latter demanded the evacuation by the Filipino forces, not only of Hermita, Paco and Malate, but also of Pandacan, which is a town not comprised in the municipality of Manila, giving as a reason that these places were included in the capitulation of Manila and its defenses. Aguinaldo yielded to these demands, sacrificing everything to maintain friendly relations; and, believing that he would obtain justice from the American Government, he sent to Washington, as his envoy, Don Felipe Agoncillo, with instructions to lay before President McKinley the grievances of the Filipinos and to ask for the recognition of the independence of the Philippines, in fulfilment of the promises made by the

American generals. Agoncillo was not received by the President, nor heard by the American Commission in Paris.

In the meantime Admiral Dewey seized the Filipino launches in Manila Bay, the very launches that he had permitted to sail under the Filipino flag. In the waters of Batangas he also captured the steamer "Abbey," which had been bought by the Filipinos for the transportation of arms. This was the steamer that had landed at Cavite the two thousand rifles on its first expedition. When Aguinaldo sent a commissioner to ask for an explanation of these captures, the Admiral became very angry, refused to give any explanation whatever, and dismissed the Filipino commissioner like a servant who had committed great faults. Even Mayor Bell, who had accompanied the commissioner, went away greatly disgusted with so strange a reception.

What did Aguinaldo do then? In order to avoid a conflict which was becoming inevitable, in view of the more and more incomprehensible conduct of the American commanders, he appointed a commission to draw up a *modus vivendi* with General Otis pending the conclusion of the treaty of Paris and the decision of the American Congress as to the fate of the Philippines.

Seeing that Agoncillo had not been successful in his endeavors, Aguinaldo sent to America another commission, composed of Agoncillo, General Riego de Diós, Luna, Lozada and others. The first commission had been without result, as the one appointed by General Otis to meet it expressed itself very vaguely and alleged that it had not received any authority from Washington and could not therefore accept any of the propositions of the Filipino commissioners. The second commission had hardly set foot on American soil when the conflict broke out, which we had tried to avoid by the sacrifice of many rights and at the cost of great humiliation.

The Americans say that the Filipinos provoked the hostilities, an assertion which the facts I have related clearly disprove. If the Filipinos had wished hostilities, they could have begun immediately after the capitulation of Manila, because at that time their troops occupied the suburbs of Hermita, Malate and Paco, the town of Pandacan and a part of the suburb of Tondo. Besides, there were very few American troops in Manila. Moreover, the Filipino commissioners in America must have known something of our intentions, and we would not have made it

necessary for them to leave that country like escaped criminals, for we would not have had the heart to expose them to the wrath of the American Government and its agents. Finally, General Ricarte, who commanded the Filipino troops that occupied the outskirts of Manila, was at Malolos conferring with General Aguinaldo on the night when the conflict broke out.

The truth is that the Filipino people have never felt disposed to measure their strength with powerful America, otherwise Aguinaldo could not have put up with so many infamous actions at the hands of the American generals. They have always considered themselves little and insignificant beside the American people, and hence they never thought of provoking the Americans, for they have always been aware that, even if they should gain a few victories, the fortunes of war would necessarily change as soon as reinforcements arrived from America.

And it is still more true that the Filipino people, educated by long sufferings during the protracted dominion of Spain, have learned to reflect and to judge things calmly, even in the midst of great excitement. They know that, no matter how great and civilized a people may be, it contains bad men as well as good men; and, therefore, they do not condemn all. For the same reason, they admire the bravery shown by the American army in the recent fights; they still entertain, unalterably, that friendship toward the American people which places them above all other nations; they trust that the popular Government of America will not sink to the level of the theocratic Government of Spain, and that the spirit of justice, now obscured by ambition, will again shine in their firmament, as the civic virtues of their ancestors shine in their history and traditions.

The Filipino people are struggling in defense of their liberties and independence with the same tenacity and perseverance as they have shown in their sufferings. They are animated by an unalterable faith in the justice of their cause, and they know that if the American people will not grant them justice, there is a Providence which punishes the crimes of nations as well as of individuals.

APOLINARIO MABINI.